

Appleby Archaeology Group

Members Evening

Two members spoke of there recent experiences in the field at the Members Evening following the AGM in January

Patricia Crompton who is studying for a degree in archaeology at Bradford University spoke of her experiences excavating on South Mainland Shetland in Summer 2000. This excavation is currently the largest in Europe, and provides evidence of multi-occupation. Earlier phases have removed a 20th century croft house, 17th and 15th century buildings, 12-14th century evidence of Norse occupation and some earlier Viking evidence of the 8-12th century. The archaeologists have now reached the Iron Age level. The aims of the research are to identify the chronology and to accurately date site, to find out why brochs were built, and to place the site in the wider context of the North Atlantic Iron Age and earlier if possible. The features highlighted by Patricia were brochs and wheelhouses both found in the north and west of Scotland.

Brochs are circular dry stone towers 13-20m in diameter with hollow walls containing chambers and a staircase. They were possibly built as defensive homesteads. The remains of the broch on this site had been partly restored, and was only a few meters high. Wheelhouses are stone built circular structures with partition walls projecting inwards like the spokes of a wheel. Patricia explained that on the site there was a wheelhouses, dated 0-50 AD, built inside the

broch, indicating that the broch is the older structure.

Wheelhouses were also built around the broch.

A series of slides demonstrated details of the features on the site and showed some of the artefacts found. These include carved Pictish stone, weaving weights, and worked bone. The talk stimulated a number of questions from the floor and perhaps enthusiasm for joining in a dig.

Harry Hawkins vice-chairman of the group then spoke about his experiences when he joined a Landscape Fieldwork Archaeology Course in The Eden Valley last Summer. He and two other course members were given a project to look at the landscape around Kirklands. With the use of maps and slides Harry described the geological features which indicated that this is a site which, from the end of the last Ice Age, would have provide suitable conditions to support people. The site was examined by field walking and surveying. Several features were seen. In one area the arrangements of boulders were considered more than random as they formed rectangular and horseshoe outlines. There was no interlinking between the structures. In an adjacent area linear and circular features were seen. Harry suggested that these findings posed rather than answered questions about the site. He concluded by asking these questions. What are the features ? When were they used? Can these questions be answered by further exploration, and is this a future project for the group?

Both speakers were warmly applauded and thanked by the Chairman for their presentations.